NATIVE AMERICANS - FORTS

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POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 4- Section 2

My friend, Moody Moore, close observer of things in general and out of door things in particular, has been telling me for years of an Indian grave on the old road between the Jake place and Huntersville, about opposite the mouth of Browns Creek. In the days of his youth, he had hunted for the traditional jar of silver buried on the rising ground near the mouth of a stream, away back in the 1750's or 1760's.

His uncle the late William Moore of Browns Creek, had found a large heap of piled stones when he worked on the new road around the Jake Hill in 1890. He told the young nephew about it and Moody proceeded to investigate to see if by any chance this might be the place the treasure was buried.

Moving tons of stones, Mr. Moore found no silver, but he did uncover the bones of not less than a half dozen men. The bodies had been laid in a circle, feet to the center. One at least had been a man of gigantic stature, with a skull of unusual thickness. From the way his teeth were worn down, it was presumed he had been up in years when he met death. No silver was found, nor anything else to show whether Indians or whites had been buried there. The bodies had been placed upon the carpet of forest leaves and moulded, with no excavation, and tons of stones piled upon them. The heap was circular and per-

haps a rod in diameter.

The tragedy which overtook this party will remain one of the mysteries of these mountains. If they were Indians and the victims of a battle between tribes, I read the sign that they belonged to the victorious side. They were laid to rest with care on a pleasant bench in the full light of the rising sun. But if Indians, surely some stone weapons, implements and ornaments would have been found.

As for the whites, it is not unlikely that parties of hunters and trappers met death in the forest vastness of these mountains prior to the general settlements which began in the late 1760's and early 70's. Cold might wipe them out in the winter; the regulars of the standing armies of the Six Nations, in accord with provisions of the Treaty of Albany, 1722, would kill any whites trespassing upon Indian ground; a party of mercenary scalp hunters looking for scalps to claim bounty at Detroit in French and Indian war times, would murder whoever they found; or it may have been the work of a bloody band of outlaws raiding a camp for the winter fur catch. Indian regulars, mercenaries or white outlaws would leave the bones of their victims to bleach where they fell, to be gathered together for decent and perhaps Christian burial by the first party of white hunters.

Little or no record need ever be expected now to be found of such disappearances. There was a strong order by the King of Great Britain to keep out of the Indian Country

on the Western Waters." By solemn treaty he said that the Indian could kill with impunity any of his subjects so trespassing. No record of such loss, if known, would be upon the court books at Staunton. In the Augusta County records there now and then appears the notation of a man on the delinquent tax list or one wanted for debt or for trial or witness "Disappeared in the Greenbrier Country."

Along in the 1750's in the Greenbrier Country, "a days journey from Ft. Dinwiddie" on Jacksons River, a party of Indians, some say as many as fifteen, were killed by whites. This brought reverberations even to the King's court at London, and that mighty monarch made due apology to the Indian nation for the breach upon their people. The man responsible got out of it by saying he could not tell what kind of Indians they were; they looked like a war party of Shawnees to him, and he was taking no chances.

That sounded so like a Marlinton trick to me that I have always put Marlins Bottom as the place where it was pulled. However, the mound at Huntersville is twenty miles from Fort Dinwiddie---a fair days walk on mountain trails---and it may be this cairn marks the resting place of these friendly Indians done to death through excess of caution, to put the best face possible on the matter.

The absence of any personal belongings of stone would indicate burial after robbery. The care with which the bodies were laid away indicates to me burial by friends. The placing of the bodies on top of the ground may mean burial in the

winter time on frozen ground, or merely lack of good digging implements and hurry to get away by the survivors. However, they did a good job of rock piling.

The good state of preservation of the bones is sign to me that burial could not have been long before the arrival of settlers in the Knapps Creek valley, about one hundred sixty-five years ago.

There are Indian mounds scattered all over this region; most of dirt but occasionally a stone pile. In some of them remains of men are found, with personal stone belongings. In others only the sign of fire is seen.

Talking about lost men in these mountains, I would say that for wholesale disappearance the "Sandy Creek Voyage" holds the record. This was a demonstration in force against the Indian towns on the Ohio River. It was staged in cold weather to catch the Indians in winter quarters, before they were ready for their spring time raids. The army traveled by way of the Big Sandy route. On the Tug Fork or Sandy on the way out a young buffalo was killed. The hide was hung in a tree to be taken on the return trip. The ones who did return that way were so hungry they cut the hide up in throngs -tugs-and ate it. Hence the name Tug River.

The winter had been mild east of the mountains, but when the army got well into the mountains there was one of those late snow storms with great cold which so often end up a mild winter. They talk about two feet of snow and twenty degrees below zero

and no doubt the Sandy Creek voyagers experienced that much and more. The army broke up into small parties to work their way back to the settlements east of the mountains. How many perished from cold exposure and starvation is not known. I have no doubt that some of the parties attempted to return by way of the Greenbrier valley- the most direct route home for those who were from the Jackson River, Cow Pasture and Shenandoah settlements. There were two causes for the army breaking up. One was that each rugged individual composing the army had a better way home than the one proposed by the leaders. We have people in the mountains to this day who demonstrate such character. The other reason was that by breaking up in smaller parties, and spreading out over different routes, some would find game and get through, while if they stuck together all might perish. It is not an unreasonable guess that the bones under the rock pile near Huntersville might possibly be the remains of a party returning from the ill fated Sandy Creek Voyage. Anyway, these mountains were full of freezing, starving men, treking back home in the deep snow and fearful cold of a late winter storm.

Some years ago a number of well preserved skeletons were found behind a wall under a rock cliff on the Greenbrier below the Buckley place at the mouth of Swago. My guess was that these were Sandy Creek voyagers. They were white men as they had long heads.

About the tradition of buried silver treasure in these

mountains, the versions differ. The general run of the story is that a party of Frenchmen and Indians were traveling this way from the Mississippi Country loaded down with silver, making for Ft. Duquesne and Canada. At the mouth of a stream where a run came into a smaller stream, they found they were pursued. Here they buried pots of silver and sought safety in flight and never returned. I have heard the exact location is the mouth of Swago, Stony Creek, Douthards Creek, Clover Creek, Deer Creek, forks of Deer Creek, mouth and forks of Sitlington Creek, Indian Draft and most everywhere else. However, I hold there is little doubt that this treasure is buried on the waters of Stony Creek. Up on the family's Jerico Farms, there are still holes in the ground which a treasure seeker dug seventy years ago. I do not argue the matter but listen with patience to all who know where this treasure is, even to those who are so far off their base as to say that French Creek, in Upshur, or Jackson Mill in Lewis, or Peel Tree on Lost Creek and Clarksburg on the West Fork, in Harrison have the exact location.

From an Editorial written by Calvin W. Price in the Pocahontas Times for May 1935.

Lillian Belcher

Frontier Forts of Pocahontas Co.

The old forts used in Indian time as shown by records and tradition in territory now comprising of Pocahontas were as follows;

Fort Burnside. On Greenbrier river. Location not definitely known. Supposed to be near the station Burnside on the Greenbrier division of the C.&O. ry.

Fort Cloverlick--On Clover Creek about one and a half miles from its mouth, near the north fork of the Creek, and about 300 yards from the residence of the late C. P. Doer.

Fort Drennen---West of the public road, about 300 yards, in an old Orchard, at the foot of Elk Mt., half a mile northwest of Edroy.

Fort Buckley--At Mill Point on the site of the home of Isaac McNeel, on the northern bank of Stamping Creek about one and one half mi. from Greenbrier river. Sometimes called Frot Day or Fort Price.

Fort Warwick--Located on Deer Creek about three miles from its mouth and about four miles from Cass. This fort was near the home of Peter Warwick.

There was also an old fort near Green Bank on land formerly owned by James Wooddell and now owned by Henry Wooddell. The name of this Fort is not known. The old building was still standing a few years ago, and may still be there.

There was also an old fort on Greenbrier river near the mouth of Stony Creek on the Levi Gay farm, now owned by Pat Gay. It was at this place Baker was killed by the Indians. Richard Hill, the ancestor of all the Hills in the Levels, and Baker in the early morning went to the river to wash for breakfast when the Indians fired on them killing Baker but Hill escaped to the fort, The alarm was given that Indians were in the country and about twenty men came from the Levels but no trace could be found and on their return to the Levels, the Bridgor boys left the main party and took a near cut and were killed in the low place on the mountain now owned by W. H. Auldridge where they were waylaid and killed by Indians.

The Pocahontas Times--Marlinton, W. Va. Jan 25, 1917.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chap. 4 -2- a. (1) Raids, depredations & massacres.

North of the present boundary of Virginia, and particularly near the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, the Indians were numerous and their villages large. The principals of these tribes were the Delawares, Mingoes and Shawnees, the greater part of whom moved westward when the French were forced to abandon their position at the forks of the Ohio river. When improvements were commenced by the whites, therefore, in western Virginia, the country was almost entirely unhabited, excepting by wild beasts of the forests, and frequent straggling bands of Indian hunters, who wrecked their vengeance on the whites when-ever opportunity afforded. The struggle on this side of the mountain was bitter and longand the pioneers had many memories of Indian atrocities.

The first effect of Braddock's defeat occurred about a month later, August 1755. The Indians appeared at the mouth of Knapps Creek and killed twelve persons and took eight prisoner. This raid ended the hostilities for the year 1755.

The summer of 1756 was a bloody one on the waters of New River and Roanoke River, but the settlements between Marlinton and Staunton were not disturbed until September and the pioneers had gotten careless. This caused the authorities a great deal of apprehension. It is certain that a big company of soldiers was garrisoned here in 1756, but must have been recalled before August 12th. It is likely that from that time on Ft. Dinwiddie, twenty-five miles from Marlinton, on Jacksons River, was the fort on which the settlers relied for protection.

From the records I have read I find that it was about Sept. 11th of the above year that the Indians appeared in the

territory protected by Ft. Dinwiddie, which included what is now Pocahontas County, and raided the settlers for four days, then withdrew with their prisoners. During the raid they killed twelve persons, wounded two, and carried off thirty-five prisoners. It is almost certain that these persons were killed and captured at their homes for there was no evidence of any fight at the fort. It was in this same raid that James Mayse was killed and his family taken prisoners.

It is interesting to recall the fact that on the banks of Marlins Run, afterwards called Birds Run, is the burial place of a little child that was dashed to death by an Indian warrior, when overtaken by a party of Bath and Rockbridge men, seeking to rescue Mrs Mayse, her son Joseph, an unmarried woman with an infant in her arms, a Mr. McClenachan and some other captives. The burial place is a few rods diagonally from the east angle of the old barm owned by Uriah Bird, on the margin of the stream. The infant was buried at the foot of a tree where it had been found a few minutes after its death. The burial took place a few hours later before the pursuers set out on their return. The grave was dug with hunting knives, hatchets and naked fingers. The covering of the grave was completed with heavy stones to prevent foxes and other animals from getting at the remains. This was the first white child known to history to have died and been buried west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Joseph Mayse then thirteen years old was on a pack horse. The Indians and their prisoners were overtaken by the pursuing party just after crossing the Greenbrier River at the Island ford, and the horse upon which Joseph Mayse was riding became frightened, and ran off. It became entangled in a grape vine and the boy

was pulled off into a thicket of nettles. The Indians were so closely pressed that they did not have time to turn and kill the boy. The Indians were pursued some distance up Stony Creek and Indian Draft but could not be overtaken. On their return the pursuing party picked up the young prisoner, still in the nettles near the fording and took him back to the settlement. Mrs. Mayse, Mrs. Sloan and the nameless white girl were taken to the Indian towns near Chillicothe, about 275 miles from Marlinton by the route taken by their captors. Fron here they made their way toward Detroit. By the aid of friendly Indians they received directions, and finally reached Pennsylvania and then home, after an absence of about fifteen months. Some years after his rescue, Joseph Mayse fought in the Battle of Point Pleasant. In this battle he was severly wounded. He suffered from this wound for about forty years when he had his leg amputated above the knee. At this time Dr. Charles Lewis came all the way from Lynchburg and remained with his patient six weeks. Joseph Mayse served as magistrate between forty-five and fifty years, and was twice sheriff. His memory was considered as reliable as an official record. His health was good and he lived to be eighty-nine years old.

At one time, when the Indians were seen prowling around in the neighborhood of Warwick's Fort, which is situated at the forks of North Fork and Deer Creek on an elevation of ground that commands a fine view of the surrounding country, the settlers made haste to the fort. Early in the morning a man by the name of Sloan left the fort and crossed the North Fork Creek to a melon or potato patch. When he hadn't returned by noon, a party went in search for him. They found him dead and scalped with an arrow through

his body. Deeds like this were dear to the hearts of the Indians; these were the deeds that made a real warrior out of an Indian, and for which honor any Indian would risk his life over and over again.

At one time Thomas Jarvis, whose home was in a field now owned by C. C. Arbogast, went in search of his cow. When he came back, the Indians had rifled his house, had taken his feather bed tick and left the feathers emptied on the floor; they had also taken all the blankets, kettles, butcher knives and bear meat.

About this time, 1780, Elizabeth Galford, fourteen year old daughter of Thomas Galford, was sent on an errand and was never heard or afterward. The settlers far and near searched for the missing girl but she was never found. While searching along the creeks, an Indian trail was discovered and some evidence that the girl had been captured by the Indians. Some of the settlers followed the trail as far as possible but finally had to give it up.

After the attack on Donnelly's fort in May 1778, the Indians made no attempt to effect further mischief in the Greenbrier country until 1780. The fort at Point Pleasant guarded the principal pass to the settlements on the Kanawha, in the Levels, and on the Greenbrier river, and the reception with which they had met at Col. Donnally's convinced them that not much was to be gained by going into that section of the frontier. But as they were now making great preparations for effectual operations against the whole border country, a party of them was despatched to this portion of it for the purpose of rapine and murder, and to ascertain the state of the country and its capacity to resist invasion.

The party then sent into the Greenbrier country consisted of twenty-two warriors, and committed their first act of atrocity near the house of Lawrence Drinnan, about twelve miles above the

Little Levels or about two miles above Marlinton. Henry Baker and Richard Hill, who were staying at Drinnan's, going early in the morning to the river to wash, were shot at by the Indians. The exact spot, I am told by Mr. T. S. McNeel, is near where the cattle barn now stands on the Pocahontas County Fair Grounds. Baker was killed but Hill escaped and went back to the house. When the Indians fired at Baker, he was near a fence between the river and Drinnan's and within gunshot of the latter place. Fearing to cross the fence for the purpose of scalping Baker, they prized it up, and with a pole fastened a noose around his neck, drew him down the river bank, scalped and left him there.

Fearing an attack on the house, Mr. Drinnan made such preparations as he could to repel them, and sent a servant to the Little Levels, with the news and to procure assistance. He presently returned with twenty men, two of whom were killed as they proceeded toward Drinnan's, by the savages who lay in ambush awaiting them. The men remained there during the night. In the morning, seeing nothing of the Indians, they buried Baker and set out on their return to the Levels, taking with them all who were at Drinnan's and most of their property.

When they arrived at the forks of the road at Mill Point, the party debated among themselves as to whether they would take the main route leading through a gap which was a favorable situation for an ambuscade, or continue on the farther but more secure way. All except the two Bridger boys and Nathan, a colored boy belonging to Lawrence Drinnan, agreed to come down by the Saddell place situated in the Marvin neighborhood, this being the longer but more open route. The three boys took the mountain trail through "The Notch" on the Auldridge mountain.

Both of the Bridger boys were killed and buried at Mill Point fort on the knoll now occupied by the Lanty McNeill residence. The colored boy was saved by stopping to tie his moccasin. The whoop of the Indians was heard signalling from Gillilian Mountain, Auldridge Mountain, and the head of Stamping Creek, informing each other that the whites were aroused and that they must flee.

They next proceeded to the house of Hugh McIver (McKeever) where they killed the owner and took his wife prisoner. In going from here, they met John Prior, who with his wife and infant were on their way to the country on the south side of the Big Kanawha. Prior was shot through the breast, but anxious for the fate of his wife and child, stood still until one of the Indians came up and laid hold of him. In spite of his severe wounds, Prior proved too strong for ~~for~~ the Indian, and the other Indians not interfering, he forced him to disengage himself from the struggle. Seeing that no violence was offered to Mrs. Prior or the infant, Prior walked off without any attempt being made to stop or otherwise molest him. The Indians had allowed him to depart expecting him to obtain assistance and endeavor to regain his wife and child, and that an opportunity of waylaying any party coming from this view would then be afforded them. Prior returned to the settlement, told of the abovd incidents and died that night. His wife and child were never again heard of, and it is thought more than likely that they were murdered on their way, being unable to travel as fast as the Indians wished.

The next went to a house at Edray, occupied by Thomas Drinnan and a Mr. Smith with their families. There they made prisoners of Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Drinnan and a child, and going on their way toward their towns killed an old gentleman by the name of Monday and his wife.

These were the last outrages committed by the Indians in the

Greenbrier Settlements. Although the war was carried on by them for years against the frontier settlements, they did not again attempt an incursion into it. Its earlier days had been days of tribulation and woe, and those who were foremost in occupying and forming settlements in it, had to endure all that savage fury could inflict.

Materials from:

Wither's Chronicles of Border Warfare.

Articles written by Roscoe Brown and published in the Pocahontas Times

Pocahontas County History by Dr. William T. Price.

Hardesty's Historical & Geographical Encyclopedia.

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Chapter 4-Section2-parts a & b--

Many of our troubles grew out of the right to take the Indians' lands from them. In 1774 so many white people had taken up land on the west side of the divide and made their homes there that there was enough to form a colony but there was not a paper title. The treaty of 1772 had established the Alleghenies as a dividing line and shortly afterward the settlers came into that part of Virginia. But they had to fight for it. From the time that Braddock was defeated on the Monongahela river, the mountaineers held on by the hardest. They lived in stockade forts and every man had to be an Indian fighter. Every summer Indian bands came into the country and there were so many cases of families killed and tortured that the mountain boys were bred in the hatred of Indian foes.

The whites were obliged to kill the Indians in order to defend themselves. At one time when the Indians were seen prowling around the fort near Greenbank, all the settlers hastened to the fort. The next morning a man left the fort and never came back again. When a party went in search of him about noon, they found him dead. The Pioneer William Warwick, knowing the ways of the Indians, knew they would be on the job bright and early the next morning, and in order to give vent to his feelings for the death of his friend, he left the fort in the night and concealed himself on the banks of Deer Creek. The Indian made bold by his success and thirsting for more glory, came into sight. At about this same time a shot rang out and the Indian fell dead. The wildest excitement pre-